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DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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POLITICAL

Meeting of Federal House of Representatives (UNCLASSIFIED)

The second session of the 1955 meeting of the Federal House of Representatives took place in Lagos from August 17 through August 30, 1955.

The most important measure debated by the House was the Gorsuch civil service wage recommendations, which was passed as presented in a Government White Paper (see Labor below). Other significant bills passed were:

A Factories Bill providing for safety standards in the 900 Nigerian establishments registered under the Factories Ordinance and establishing an inspection service to investigate factory conditions and to prosecute violations of the safety regulations.

The Federal Supreme Court Bill establishing Nigeria's highest court to replace the present West African Court of Appeal. The Federal Supreme Court will hear appeals from the various regional High Courts and will have original jurisdiction in cases concerning constitutional interpretation or disputes between the states within the Federation of Nigeria.

The Magistrate's Court (Lagos) Ordinance, which established the requirements, grades, and salaries of magistrates in the Lagos area.

Amendments to the Evidence and Criminal Procedure Ordinances, which streamlined the former requirements that medical and other expert witnesses present their evidence in person.

A Criminal Code Amendment Bill widening the Government's power to ban the import of subversive publications into Nigeria by removing the present requirement that each banned publication be listed by name: the amendment provides that the Governor

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General in Council may prohibit the importation of a series of publications or the works of a particular publisher or press.

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In contrast to the March meeting, House members were less restrained in their remarks and seemingly less governed by party or floor leadership. Despite a speech by Governor General Sir James ROBERTSON urging responsible behavior and the respective duties of members from the Government and Opposition benches (see D-29, Aug. 26, 1955), the House often degenerated into verbal rough and tumble. Personal antipathy between NCNC Chief Whip T.O.S. BENSON and NCNC Parliamentary Chairman, Minister K. O. MBADIWE, was evident in several thinly-disguised attacks by each upon the other delivered on the floor of the house. On three Government resolutions Mr. Benson either voted against his party or offered amendments to the measures.

The independent Daily Times, editorially criticizing the House and the Speaker for its "rowdy behavior", was censured by Government and Opposition members, who stated that the newspaper had no right to "impugn the dignity of the House" and requested the Speaker to consider the removal of press representatives from house meetings should similar press attacks recur.

1956 Constitutional Convention (UNCLASSIFIED)

During the past fortnight, political leaders have made further statements as to representation and constitutional policy at next year's conference to consider constitutional revision (see D-18, July 30, 1955, p.1). Abba HABIB, Northern Regional Minister for the Northern Cameroons and General Secretary of the NPC, stated that the opposition Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) Party should be excluded from the discussions. Private motions in the recent meeting of the Federal House by the Honorable ALEGE, Member from the North's Kabba Division, called for the creation of a Middle Belt State, to include Kabba, Ilorin, Plateau, Benue, Adamawa, Southern Zaria, and Southern Bauchi Provinces, and, secondly, to gain parliamentary recognition for the United Middle Belt Congress to insure that the part will be represented at the 1956 conference. Both motions were defeated by the House.

In Lagos, Dr. Udo UDOMA, UNIP Opposition Member of the Federal House from the Eastern Nigeria, advocated the establishment of an 8-State federation, 4 from the present North and 2 each from the Eastern and Western Regions. Clearly referring to the North, Dr. Udoma stated that the UNIP was opposed to regionalization because it does not avoid the possibility of one region seceding from the federation. He declared that the UNIP would press for the return of constitutional residual powers from the regions to the central

government.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Selection of the delegates to next year's conference will presumably be made by the Governor General with no more than token reference to the NCNC-dominated Federal Council of Ministers. Even if the West should hold regional election before the conference and its present Action Group Government were defeated by the NCNC, conference representation would undoubtedly be extended to the AG as an opposition party which can claim a substantial membership. Delegates to the constitutional conferences at London and Lagos in 1953 and 1954 were appointed by the Governor upon application of the various parties; all expenses were defrayed by the Government.

Rumored Removal of Eastern Deputy Speaker (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Deputy Governor of Eastern Nigeria has denied a Lagos Action Group press report that the Eastern Government has removed S. O. EYO, Deputy Speaker and NCNC Chief Whip of the Eastern House. Mr. Eyo's right to hold his present position has been challenged because of his prison record. Until the new constitution prohibited membership in both Federal and Regional legislatures, Eyo was a member of the previous central House of Representatives.

Absence of Nigerian Leaders (UNCLASSIFIED)

With the completion of the Regional and Federal legislatures' summer sessions, a substantial exodus of Nigerian and expatriate political leaders is taking place. In the North both the Premier, AHMADU the Sardauna of Sokoto, and Governor Sir Bryan SHERWOOD-SMITH have left for the United Kingdom, the former to attend a course on local government, and the latter on leave. Western Premier AWOLOWO has announced no travel plans, but Governor Sir John RANKINE will not return from the United Kingdom until October. Eastern Premier AZIKIWE has left Nigeria on a six weeks' visit to the United Kingdom for a throat operation and for discussions with technical representatives concerned with the establishment of the Eastern Cinema, Printing and Information Service Corporations. During Zik's absence, Mazi Mbonu OJIKE, Eastern Minister of Finance, will be Acting Premier.

West Establishes New Electoral Regulations (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Western Regional Government has released the text of a law entitled "Parliamentary and Local Government Electoral Regulations, 1955". The new law provides for modified universal adult suffrage for parliamentary and local government elections. To qualify for registration as a voter in local or regional elections a voter must be a person who: (a) is a British subject or British protected person who has resided continuously within the district

for two years prior to the date of registration; or (b) has paid to the prescribed regional or local authority direct or income tax for the previous two financial years; or (c) is a native of the division containing the political constituency, is 21 years or older, and has paid direct or income tax for the year immediately previous.

The new law reallocates the region into single seat parliamentary constituencies. Registration of voters under the new law will commence on November 1, 1955.

COMMENT (UNCLASSIFIED)

Previously, the Western Region had two sets of electoral regulations: local government positions were elected by direct adult tax sufferage; regional parliamentary elections to the Western House were conducted on an electoral college system, also using a tax franchise. Because few of the women in the West pay tax, the old regulations in practice amounted to male adult sufferage, based on the payment of direct tax during the previous year.

NCNC opposition leaders of the Western House have complained that the new law is unfair in that it will be extremely difficult for persons who have resided in several constituencies to qualify as voters. They also object to the re-apportionment of parliamentary seats which results in the transfer of three seats from the opposition Benin-Delta Area to Action Group constituencies in the Western part of the region.

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ECONOMIC

1955-1956 Cameroons Cocoa Prices (UNCLASSIFIED)

At a recent meeting of the Southern Cameroons Marketing Board it was decided that cocoa producer prices will remain unchanged in the Southern Cameroons during the 1955-1956 season. The board decided that in maintaining producer prices at their present level, in spite of the fall in selling prices of cocoa since a year ago farmers would be encouraged to increase production by improved farming methods. According to the decision of the board the naked ex-scale port of shipment prices for next season will be £200/ton for grade one main crop and light crop. The price for grade two main and light crop will be £185.

COMMENT (UNCLASSIFIED)

The announcement of the Cameroons Marketing Board sets prices identical to those previously established by the Eastern and Western Regional Boards (see D-18, July 30, 1955, p.4).

Government Approval of the African Continental Bank (UNCLASSIFIED)

A licence has recently been issued by the Financial Secretary of the Federation of Nigeria for the approval of the African Continental Bank. This will be the seventh bank to be granted a licence in Nigeria. The other six are: the Bank of British West Africa, Barclay's Bank, the National Bank of Nigeria, the Merchant Bank, the Agbomagbe Bank and the British and French Bank.

The African Continental Bank was founded in 1948 with a capital of £250,000. By 1955 the capital had been raised to £1,000,000 fully paid up. The bank now has fifteen branches situated in various cities throughout the Federation.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

There have been recurrent rumors during the past few years that the bank, which was established by Eastern Premier Azikiwe, is in a precarious financial position because of political loans to NCNC stalwarts and unrealistic accounting procedures. The approval of a government licence would appear to indicate that the bank, if not actually solvent, has satisfied government auditors as to the veracity of its balance sheet.

Eastern Rent Control (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Governor of Eastern Nigeria has announced that rents will soon be controlled throughout that Region. A bill for a law to control high rents is now being prepared by the Eastern Nigerian Minister of Welfare.

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Although not so stated, the proposed bill probably results from the fact that higher rents are becoming an increasingly serious problem, with further increases envisaged as a result of the Gorsuch wage increases.

Uranium and Niobium (UNCLASSIFIED)

Announcement has recently been made that a small quantity of uranium and niobium (Columbium) has been found as a result of diamond drilling near Ririwe-Kano in Kabba Province, Northern Nigeria. Since the uranium is found in granitic formations, it is doubtful that present extraction processes would permit economic exploitation.

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LABOR

Federal House Passes Gorsuch Wage Revision (UNCLASSIFIED)

After two days' debate, the Federal House approved the Government's White Paper concerning the implementation of the modifications in the civil servants' structure and salaries drawn up by the Gorsuch commission (see D-25, Aug. 16, 1955, p.7). The Federal White Paper approved most of the commission's recommendations but, like the Eastern Region, disallowed children's allowances for expatriate officers (only the Northern Region has approved such allowances). The revised salaries and grades are retroactive to October 1, 1954; a lump-sum payment of arrears will be made in the near future. Cost to the Federal Government is estimated at £1.5 million for the present fiscal year (April 1, 1955 through March 1, 1956) and £970,000 for future years.

In presenting the White Paper to the House, Chief Secretary Ralph GREY described the Gorsuch proposals as "a good job done on an extremely arduous task". He said that the cost of the charges could be met from ordinary Federal revenue since provision for salary increases had been made in the estimates passed by the House in March. Grey emphasized that the increased salaries and allowances for expatriate officers should ameliorate the problem of obtaining the needed foreign technicians but that the House should not consider the problem as solved.

United Africa Company Announces Wage Increase (UNCLASSIFIED)

United Africa Company (UAC), the largest private employer of Nigerian labor, announced the details of its wage and salary revision on the day following the publication of the Federal White Paper on the Gorsuch proposals. The company's new rates provide for increases ranging from 11% for senior African clerical staff to 36% for apprentices. Increases are retroactive to October 1, 1954 but pension contributions will be deducted only from January 1, 1955.

Federal Minimum Wage Discussions Break Down (UNCLASSIFIED)

While the Federal House debated the implementation of the Gorsuch proposals for Federal established (salaried) civil servants, negotiations were being conducted by the Whitley Council, which is composed of government and labor representatives, seeking to establish minimum wage rates for federal daily-paid laborers in Lagos and the regions.

The workers' representatives on the Council rejected a government proposal for a graduated wage schedule ranging donward from a Lagos wage of four shillings and five pence (five pence more than the present four shillings), the labor spokesman holding out for a country-wide six shillings minimum. The workers are demanding a six shilling minimum in view of the substantial Gorsuch increases for established staffs. Thus far the demand has been turned down by the government thus creating a deadlock. It is understood that if the minimum wage deadlock continues, Government will suggest that all federal daily-paid workers be converted into the permanent establishment after four years.

Eastern Labor Leader Urges ANTUF's Dissolution (UNCLASSIFIED)

N. ASUZOR, General Secretary of Eastern Nigerian Labor Unions, has urged that the All Nigeria Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) be dissolved. In a press statement he stated that regionalization of the civil service has made a "hypocritical farce" of ANTUF, and suggested that the establishment of a regional labor organization, which would deal directly with the respective Regional Governments. As example of his plan Mr. Asuzor cited Russia where, he said, separate central labor organizations exist in each of the 16 Republics.

EDUCATION

Federal House Meeting (UNCLASSIFIED)

Compared with the lengthy discussions of educational matters which occupied the recent meeting of the Northern House of Assembly, there were few speeches in the Federal House meeting which touched on education. Members did express their concern, however, that the salaries of teachers in private or partially subsidized schools should be raised to meet the increases granted to government teachers under the Gorsuch wage revision. At least one opposition member, referring to the East's plans to establish two universities (see D-25, Aug. 15, p.8), stated that the proposed Catholic university will allow Eastern leaders to escape from their "visionary" commitments to set up a government-financed regional university. A private member's motion was passed by the House which urged that a faculty of Economics be established as soon as possible at University College, Ibadan.

Eastern Universal Primary Education (UNCLASSIFIED)

Eastern Minister of Education I. U. AKPABIO said in a recent address to regional education officers at Enugu that the government will present a new education law for the East at the next session of the Regional House.

The new law will establish ministerial policy control of all education in the region and will require that the ministry approve educational standards and teachers' salaries for all schools with classes at the primary level. Universal primary education is planned to come into force in January 1957, the Minister said, that date being set so that the interim period may be utilized to train the necessary teachers.

Akpabio explained that the greater part of the ministry's responsibilities for primary schools would be delegated to county councils who would act as local educational authorities. The councils would be empowered to recommend the opening or closing of schools in their districts and would draw up and forward financial estimates for such schools.

COMMENT (UNCLASSIFIED)

The bulk of the East's primary schools are operated by missionary organizations which receive educational subsidies from the government. Until last year, such subsidies were paid by the Federal Government, and the schools had had a relatively free hand in determining their educational and administrative policies. The present arrangements involve regional control of the educational purse strings. Since the provisions of the new bill provide for

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an extensive transfer of educational powers to local political authorities, it is probable that the private schools will come under increasing political supervision unless they are willing to give up government subsidy in exchange for administrative freedom.

Esua Attacks Teachers' Salaries (UNCLASSIFIED)

E. E. ESUA, General Secretary of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) has gone on record as stating that the present general salary structure for teachers throughout Niger[illegible] is not satisfactory. It is claimed that the present salary schedule is based on grade taught with little reference to qualification or experience. The General Secretary approved preliminary steps taken by the Federal, Western and Northern Governments which have set up committees in which the N.U.T. is effectively represented. The purpose of these committees is to determine satisfactory salary scales for non-government teachers whom, it is alleged, are better off than teachers employed by the government.

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MISCELLANEOUS OFFICE ACTIVITIES

Visit of UN Official (UNCLASSIFIED)

Mr. Benjamin COHEN, an official of the United Nations, made a week's visit to Nigeria preparatory to the arrival of the Trusteeship Council's team which will inspect the French and British Trust Territories of the Cameroons in October and November of this year. While in Lagos, Mr. Cohen conferred with Government officials and Federal House members from the Cameroons.

Ojike Urges Establishment of USIS Office in Enugu (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

During a recent visit to Lagos, Mazi Mbonu OJIKE, Acting Premier of the Eastern Region, called on the Consul General and urged that a Public Affairs Officer be assigned to Enugu, capital of the Eastern Region.

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